

MIC Meeting
March 21st 5:00pm – 6:30pm
Fisheries and Working Waterfront

Special Guests

Steve Train, fishermen and aquaculturist from Long Island

Emma Fernald, multigenerational fishing family member, sternman, scallop farmer, and soon to be licensed fishermen from Islesford

Roxanne Tolman, multigenerational fishing family member and manager of Vinalhaven Co-op

Hattie Train, fishing family member, sternman, harvester, and active advocate for the fishing community

Attendees

1. Kendra Chubbuck, Co-Chair, Isle au Haut
2. Ellen Mahoney, Co-Chair, Peaks
3. Claire Oxford, North Haven
4. Olivia Jolley, Swan's Island
5. Mark Greene, Long Island
6. Janice Avignon, Long Island
7. Rachel Bishop, Frenchboro
8. Cheryl Crowley, Cliff Island
9. Laurie Webber, Matinicus
10. Eva Murray, Matinicus
11. Laurie Farley, Swan's Island
12. Jim Buccheri, Monhegan
13. Katelyn Damon, Islesford
14. Andrea Hogan, Vinalhaven
15. Margaret Snell, Maine Seacoast Mission
16. Roger Berle, Cliff Island
17. Emma Fernald, Islesford
18. Katie Ford, Great Diamond Island
19. Ingrid Gaither, Great Cranberry Island
20. Stephen Fitzpatrick, Senator Collins
21. Zach Schmesser, Congressman Golden
22. Jeanne Christie, Congresswoman Pingree
23. Michael Gora, Great Lakes Alliance
24. Bob Earnest, Chebeague
25. Elin Elisofon, Vinalhaven
26. Peter Rothschild, Islesboro
27. Alex Zipparo, Island Institute
28. Kate Tagai, Island Institute
29. Steve Train, Long Island
30. Hattie Train, Long Island
31. Roxanne Tolman, Vinalhaven

Notes

AZ Intro

Today's meeting is all about helping members of Maine Islands Coalition and other guests who are committed to supporting islands learn about how they can be better allies and supporters of fishermen and working waterfronts. This is a fairly informal panel discussion featuring three rockstar guests who are both deeply experienced in the fishing industry and working waterfronts, but are also islanders, themselves.

Maine's economic and cultural identity around seafood runs real deep. It is the main driver of our coastal economy, and for many of our islands it is unfathomable to think of those harbors without fishing boats, gear along the shore, and the bustling activity that comes with operating fishing businesses.

It's been a while since we talked about fishing and working waterfronts at MIC, so we wanted to spend today digging deeper. But rather than have folks from the mainland, nonprofits, or the government, we wanted to hear from people who are from the very islands we care most about.

Today, we will hear from:

- Emma Fernald from Islesford
- Roxanne Tolman from Vinalhaven
- Steve and Hattie Train from Long Island

Today's format will go a little bit like this- For our panelists, I will share some guiding questions below for each of you, but please, feel free to share things less formally. I will probably do about a half hour of questions with you four, followed by a Q&A discussion with the audience. But I'm very flexible. The last half hour of the meeting will involve island updates, so I hope you can stay to listen in and share any relevant island updates you would like to add.

Ellen and Kendra often facilitate these meetings, but I thought I would step in today, so they can fully participate in the discussion, along with the rest of you. Oh, and we made today's meeting at 5 with the hope that it may allow more folks to join the meeting who might not at our regular time at 10am. And because things have been hard lately- with storms, with the changing economy, and the impact of our changing climate, I want to try to focus on hope and solutions as much as possible. There are a lot of problems we can focus on, but today I want to focus on the goodness of the places and people we care about most, and how we can work together to help support them- those who make a living and drive our economy on the water.

Ellen: This is not our typical meeting time and that is by design to see if different meeting times will increase participation.

For those of you who don't know my co-chair Kendra is the Maine Women's Veterans Business Owner of the year.

Fishing is an Economic Driver – what is the state of the fishery now and where is it going in the face of so many challenges from sea level rise to property values, changes in regulations and my hope is that we can hear from experts on how, as communities, we can support people working on the water.

Panel Introduction

Emma- Little Cranberry- Sternman for 5 years- License in May, Oyster Farmer whose lease was just approved.

Roxanne- Multi-generational resident of Vinalhaven, 9 years at the Vinalhaven Fisherman's Coop as Finance Manager. Hope- Silver lining is the storms of January has exposed weaknesses where we need to build back better.

Steve- Year-round Long Island resident for 40 years, Licensed fisherman for 50 years. Fished for shrimp, scallops, lobster. Sits on many boards and panels related to fishing. Currently fishes scallop, lobster and has an aquaculture lease for kelp.

Hattie-Grew up fishing with Steve as a sternman and with a student license. Studies fisheries and aquaculture at UMaine, Orono. Started a fisheries consulting company linking fishermen, scientists, and policy makers so that information is shared across populations. Has spent time on oyster farms, lobstering, and raising kelp. Spends 1 day a month on the water working as a fisherman or harvester. Though a lot of things have changed in the fisheries, there is still a thread and change of seasons in the fisheries that forms a tradition from the old school fishing communities.

How did you get involved in fishing and what keeps you going as a fisherman?

Emma-7th generation fisherman. Never expected to pursue it, but when she got out of college she decided to fish for a season and loved it. She keeps doing it because it doesn't feel like a job. Fishes eight months out of the year and wouldn't want to spend her days any other way.

Steve- Once you start doing it, you can't stop. You don't see fishermen retire. I got into it because it was a thing a lot of people did- grandfather had him out in the boat. You come in and your hands are numb but you can't wait to get out and do it again the next morning. There is an instant gratification where every trap is like opening a Christmas present. The farming is harder to get used to, but it gets in your blood; it's almost like an addiction.

Roxanne- I don't take to the water myself, but I started at 10 years old filling bait bags for my father back when herring was the king of bait. I relish my role at the co-op because I'm working for my fishermen. There's nothing I wouldn't do to help my fishermen be out there doing what they do.

Hattie- I love fishing but it wasn't something I wanted to do full time for the rest of my life because of the uncertainty in it. But because working in the fisheries science and policy I can make sure that the people I care about are heard and their way of life can continue to exist.

How important is fishing to Vinalhaven as a municipality and a community:

There is no other industry that can carry the population of the island. We started off stonecutting and ground fishing, those industries are gone. Without lobster fishing this island would become seasonal. Fishing is too ingrained in the culture and too many jobs rely on it.

For Emma: Why have you chosen to do both aquaculture and fishing:

My number one is lobstering and it is the thing I care the most about, but I fish with my dad who is 71 and has no plans of retiring but I see the long-term effects on your body so I wanted

to have something else to do in case my body wasn't cooperating. A lot of the equipment you need to start a scallop farm are similar to fishing. I have a lot of energy and like to be busy and I thought it would mesh really well with lobstering. They are totally different paced jobs.

For Steve: You juggle different enterprises, how does that work?

Everyone else was playing with Legos and I was throwing lines and picking buoys. I've done things differently- went deep water when no one was, now is back in shore because everyone is in deep water. Scalloping you haul back every 10 minutes and it keeps you busy. Aquaculture will give him a check in April and May and then he can get his lobster gear back in the water. It isn't a set it and forget it, it needs constant tending. My farm is right in front of the house and I watch people drive right through it. Ground fishing was the one he liked the least because you set the gear and then sit in the seat driving the boat and it isn't very exciting.

As Island Communities rely on the Gulf of Maine to keep their economies viable, what are your thoughts about what islanders can do to help support the fishing industries.

Roxanne: I think it is educating a population. If you have people who are attracted to living on the islands, it is because they are fishing communities. When you come around the corner on the ferry you are looking at the working waterfront and that is the allure. But they don't understand what happens when a boat goes off the hook and when it gets back on it at the end of the day. You can't fully support an industry if you don't understand it.

Emma: We need more advocates. What Hattie does? That's needed. We aren't public speakers, grant writers or lobbyists so having people who do have those skills who can collaborate with fisherman we can get policies through. Fishermen have a reputation for being a certain kind of way, but we are all different. The best people we see as role models for the industry need to be brought to life to change the stigma around fishermen.

Steve: Zoning is important. In other states, fishermen have been forced to a commercial wharf. Make sure that your island zoning allows fishing from people's property. As properties are bought by other people, fishing stops and the working waterfront shrinks. Fishermen need to fish from their properties and they need to be able to afford to own those waterfront properties to fish from them. Aquaculture shouldn't be managed like a wild fishery. People in the town should manage it and decide where and who and how.

Schools will close without the fishery. Well, without the school the fishery will go somewhere else where their students can get educated. They can't do it themselves being on the water 200 days a year.

Hattie: special planning. Communities should get involved any time there is an aquaculture hearing. It is really something worth knowing about and making sure it is something that will benefit the entire island and not just one individual is important. spatial planning is so important to figure out how we can all coexist and work productively for everyone.

There are a few folks recreational lobstering, but we aren't considered a lobstering community. For those communities who aren't considered fishing communities, how can they support this issue?

Kendra: we have about 12 fishermen who are lobstering, scalloping and bait fishing. The summer people buy the lobsters direct from the fishermen. The schooners come in and buy the lobsters directly from the lobstermen. So we want to know what's going on and support the industry. We want to help them in anyway we can. We don't have enough fishermen to support the community. We have 1 gas pump, 1 general store. We have just enough to survive so we want the fishing industry to succeed.

Alex: That points to the fact that all these issues are important. Schools, housing, cost of transportation and fishing is right there with it.

Open up to questions from the attendees:

Roger: I'm on the Lands for Maine's Future Board and he was nominated and confirmed to fill a gap on the board as an islander and to be focused on the working waterfront. There are 3 initiatives that LMF supports, but the working waterfront one is the most important one. It is critically important to have some money at the organization that can go to supporting the projects. There was about 12 projects that were recently approved with a new infusion of money from the Governor. There is money out there to be got. LMF staff will help anyone submit a valid application and it is a thing everyone should consider for our islands.

"I would like to contribute that Governor Mills nominated me for the Land For Maine's Future Board several years ago (and I am very much still there...!) because I would be the only public member primarily focused on supporting working waterfronts. Chair Pat Kelliher and I are sort a team "backing" WWFAPP application, but as a public member I am more able to advocate for these projects beyond what Commissioner Kelliher can do. We still have a substantial amount of money available to support our island fishing communities, I would be more than happy to talk personally with anyone about the LMF program and what it can do for our fishing islands.
<rkberle@msn.com>

Ellen: How to advocate within our communities to support your efforts?

Emma: There is a lot of misinformation about what Lobstermen do or the negative effects they have on the environment or the Right whale population. If you actually talk to a lobstermen you can realize it. If you hear of things people say that isn't correct, being able to correct the mis information and misconceptions is important.

Roxanne: People are given a data point that tells a story and it is easy to believe the first thing you hear. It takes more work to find well rounded knowledge- don't rely on one avenue to gain your knowledge about the industry. There is a conversation about increasing the guage and

there are two sets of data informing the conversation. The broader and more diverse everyone's education is the better.

Jim: What is the best information source to learn?

Emma: The Maine Lobsterman's Association consistently puts out good information and science.

Steve: Usually the science coming through DMR is good, but because it is peer reviewed, it is delayed and so it can be out of date.

Curt Brown who is a fisherman and scientist for Ready Seafoods put a lot of good information out there.

The University of Maine is a good resource for lobstering and kelp farming.

The Downeast Institute is another good resource for information and science based information.

Bob Earnest: Respectfully - the sources of information that were cited are, in some cases, interest groups. Convincing thoughtful folks on any topic would seem to be best accomplished by finding sources of information that have no bias - no skin in the game. Difficult to find - for example, I can't name a source of info on whale issues that doesn't seem to have a particular bias - but it is, for me, an ongoing goal. I've fallen back on reading as broadly as I can and then trying to synthesize.

Emma: I think this is a good goal to work toward but I personally believe it doesn't exist as of yet. I think best information is found directly from fisherman, but of course that is bias as well. I don't know of any third parties with no skin in the game doing research at this time.

Steve: I don't think a lot of people understand that every rule or regulation in the lobster fishery came from industry. Nothing was forced- gauge, v-notching- most every rule we work under came from industry. If they don't believe in the rule, it's not going to work. People from outside the region don't know how this region works. The industry knows how to put rules in place that work and can be enforced.

Hattie: Go to the public meetings. Make sure you are involved and aware of what is happening with the fisheries and how people are proposing to use the water around your communities. Eat local sustainable seafood. That supports the fishermen directly.

Emma: The town has a budget line each year that the voters approve to donate money to the MLA every year to support their work and that is a good way to support an organization that supports the fishery.

Eva: Matinicus Island's recycling and solid waste program is a paid member of MLA, and among other things that has yielded some useful networking and contacts with other folks working on marine debris issues. Our library also keeps back-issues of the MLA newspaper in binders so

when summer people ask “What’s the deal with the right whale thing?” or “What’s the latest about offshore wind?” We can refer them to a series of knowledgeable articles.

How does the ferry service impact the fishery?

The rate increases are aimed at commercial truck traffic and the Vinalhaven Coop runs 6 tractor trailer trucks a week off the island which puts an economic burden on the small businesses. With the new rates those 6 trucks are the current equivalent of 8 trucks. A lot of those costs will be passed on to the consumer. By paying more for trucks, that’s less money that can go back to the fishermen.

Mark: I can’t speak for the larger islands, but the smaller islands are on a knife edge. Any problem you can name in our towns, somehow you can link it back to housing. It is all tied in. You have to get involved in your town government, as hard as it can be, that’s what counts if you want to put land aside or change zoning.

Elin: I’m wondering how many communities are working with local land trusts to procure and preserve working waterfront land?

Steve: We still have a lot of personal access on Long Island. Years ago we took over the old ferry landing when a new one was built. We asked for money and we were told we had enough private access that we didn’t need public money, but we should try again because it was over 20 years ago.

Eva: A lot of Matinicus Harbor was put in archaic “undivided property” designation and it was set up so people who had land in the middle of the island could have access to the waterfront for wharves. It is messy and people suggest dismantling it and deeding the property, but in the complex messiness we are protected from gentrification or someone buying it up, so sometimes the disorder can be your friend.

Cheryl: There is a piece of property that Sustainable Cliff Island owns and it had a fishing wharf on it that has deteriorated, but we think that it is one of the things that is important on our island. We don’t have a lot of wharves and so it is important for the lobstermen. Especially if we can build it higher and dryer to allow access into the future.

Eva: Some of the island towns are not actually towns. Matinicus is a plantation. The ordinances aren’t done by us. The situation isn’t identical in every coastal community. We need to make sure there is not a one size fits all scenario and disabuse anyone in authority that there is a concept of “the islands”, we are unique in our culture and in our needs.

Roxanne: We do have one link in that we are all unbridged and we are all beholden to the ferry to receive goods and services and it impacts the economy.

Island Updates:

Chebeague: Moving forward with FEMA work- two roads and the stone pier were destroyed during the January storms. Affordable housing- got Maine Housing application in to fund 2, 3-bedroom homes on a piece of donated land.

Cliff Island: Sustainable Cliff Island bought another house for affordable housing. It needs significant work. Applied for the Maine Island Housing grant. We have a baby on the island (2 weeks old) and babies are always exciting. Up and coming for the school.

Cranberry Islands: 5 islands make up the town of cranberry isles. Plus we own a parcel of land on the mainland for parking including a seasonal dock. So we have a lot of shoreline infrastructure for one town. Two islands have year round populations. Sutton Island is considered a summer/seasonal island and continues to be without a municipal dock. The ferry can not access the island at this time - their dock was damaged during the January storm. Even though it's a seasonal island, workers, repairmen, caretakers and some residents need access year round so this has been a hardship for a portion of our town.

Town meeting was last Saturday and it was record short and civil! All items passed and we ended much earlier than usual and that included having lunch. The Cranberry's share the sentiment that building back better is essential after the two winter storms and although we fared better than many other coastal towns, the need for improving and strengthening shoreline infrastructure is crucial. This was referenced a few times during the town meeting with much resident agreement and support.

Frenchboro: Approval for federal funding to help with harbor dredging which will increase access to the harbor. Negotiating with Maine Coast Heritage Trust and their tax exempt status because of the huge amount of land they own on the island to hopefully get some needed funds for the community.

Great Diamond: After much work, the island now has broadband internet, which was the result of a lot of volunteer work.

Isle au Haut: Current teacher is leaving in June and they have hired a new teacher from a Casco Bay Islands. Head Harbor Howlers did a jingle for Reny's on channel 6 and channel 8. Kendra will be a great grandmother in a few weeks.

Islesboro: Federal funding for new health center from Sen. Collins. Sink hole at the ferry dock has disrupted service. Many residents are against the new ferry tariff proposal.

Long Island: Moving ahead with the Maine Housing grant to build 2 duplexes on town owned land. Storm damage- FEMA, MEMA and State Rep coming to the island to view the damage. Gym that opened in the community center with a community led effort in a space that was underutilized. Tons of people donated and 50+ people have signed up. Comprehensive water

study funded by the CRP and supported by a fellow from Greater Portland Council of Governments.

Matinicus: Fewer people here in the winter than ever. But Matinicus is holding firm

Monhegan: Sustained damage during January storms. Lifts and electrical on wharf were damaged. Waiting on materials to fix that. Town meeting in April. Broadband is moving forward- hopefully to help people stay longer into the fall, diversify the economy, and help business owners.

North Haven: Thorofare waterfront project received \$200K to do a scoping and design recommendation for how to adapt the historical working waterfront and downtown area.

Peaks: Still dealing with storm damage. Public works has done an amazing job to keep the road open. Community planning process has been published and there will be a series of community meetings about the issues that were raised.

Swan's Island: Town meeting Saturday. Town clerk and selectman terms are up. Shoreup grant for assessment of carrying place beach. Discussing short term rental ordinance with registry and licensing fee proposal. People have been rebuilding docks. Worried about school consolidation.

Vinalhaven: Many residents and businesses are very concerned about the new ferry tariff proposal, especially around the cost for trucking.

MIC Business:

Please put the MIC annual report in your town report for town meeting. Let Alex know if you need a copy for inclusion.

Send in annual dues of \$200 to Kendra

Our next meeting will take place on Friday, May 3, at 10:00am on zoom. This next meeting will cover municipal leader engagement and capacity building, with a special focus on cyber security and digital resources.